

Syndor-Heidenheimer House
1602 Sealy Street
Galveston
Galveston County
Texas

HABS No. TX-2101

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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS NO. TX-2101

SYDNOR-HEIDENHEIMER HOUSE

Location: 1602 Sealy Street, Galveston, Galveston County, Texas.

Present Owner and Occupant: C.E. Warner

Significance: John Sydnor, original owner of the house, was an important figure in early Galveston history. He was mayor of the city, commission merchant and auctioneer. Sampson Heidenheimer, who later made various changes to the building, was a prominent Galveston merchant. The architect of the present appearance of the building, Nicholas Clayton, was Galveston's foremost professional designer and one of Texas' leading nineteenth century architects.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1857.
2. Architect: Nicholas Clayton designed the major addition circa 1888.

Clayton had worked in the firm of Jones and Baldwin, Architects, Memphis, Tennessee, just before and after the Civil War and received his architectural training there. The firm had sent him to Galveston to supervise the construction of the First Presbyterian Church (recorded by HABS as TX-2106). Clayton remained in Galveston and became one of the state's outstanding nineteenth century architects. Some of his most notable works include the First Presbyterian Church, St. Mary's Infirmary, The Galveston Pavilion, Harmony Hall, University of Texas Medical School and several buildings in the Strand District.

3. Alterations and additions: Sampson Heidenheimer purchased the property and around 1888 spent some \$15,000 enlarging and remodeling the house. Nicholas Clayton, the notable Galveston architect, designed a polygonal tower and embellished the structure with other medieval details to produce a romantic edifice known presently as Heidenheimer's Castle.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

Colonel John S. Sydnor, a former mayor of Galveston, during the decade of the 1850's operated the largest slave market west of New Orleans and served as his own auctioneer. He erected a house at this site, constructed largely of tabby concrete, with the usual oyster shell aggregate. During his active days he was a progressive city leader and made several contributions, notably the establishment of the first free public schools.

Sampson Heidenheimer was an early Calveston merchant and auctioneer. He came to Calveston around 1868 and established the firm of S. Heidenheimer and Company. Later his brothers entered the business with him to form Heidenheimer Brothers, commission merchants and wholesale grocers. In 1882 Charles Heidenheimer established a separate firm; the former continued the commission business and Charles Heidenheimer and Company took over the wholesale grocery business.

C. Bibliography:

1. Secondary and published sources:

Fornell, Earl W. The Galveston Era. University of Texas Press, 1961.

Galveston News. January 1, 1888.

Prepared by: John C. Carner, Jr.
Director
Calveston Architecture Inventory
March 24, 1967.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The main block, probably the original 1857 structure, is a rectangle forming the present front of the building. A hipped roof is embellished with small gabled dormers and over the main entrance the facade is carried up to a small gable. The main floor is raised several feet off the ground and approached by a flight of steps.

A rear two story addition is "L" shaped and has a mansard roof facing 16th Street and is almost certainly a result of the 1888 building program.

The octagonal four story tower with Gothic details and crenelations is located at the northwest corner of the old structure and adjoins the newer addition being part of the same building program.

On the east side a one story addition provides an outdoor terrace with cement balustrade.

2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The original section measures 30' x 40'. The ell measures 50' x 24'.
2. Foundations: Probably brick piers. House has a full basement.
3. Wall construction: Brick, stuccoed.
4. Structural system: Masonry load-bearing walls; timber floor and ceiling supports.
5. Porches: Small front porch shelters entrance step landing. Balustrade on top. Medieval detailing.
6. Chimneys: Brick interior chimneys, stuccoed.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Main entrance exterior doors are typical Victorian design, heavily molded and paneled. They lead to a narrow vestibule with heavy double doors having large etched glass panels.
8. Roof: Front block is hipped with slate shingles. Rear ell has a mansard roof fronting 16th street, but the rest is flat deck with tern covering.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plan: The basic plan of the front part of the house is the central hall type with two flanking rooms at each side.

The hall leads to the centrally located stair tower and the rooms at the rear. The upper floor follows the lower.

2. Stairway: A winding wood stair leads from the first floor to the exit onto the roof.

3. Floor: Floors are wood center-match.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Original walls and ceilings were plaster with paneled oak wainscot.
5. Doors: Typical Victorian doors, heavy panels and geometric moldings.
6. Trim: Typical Victorian trim around openings.
7. Hardware: Mortice locks, butt hinges.
8. Mechanical equipment:
 - a. Lighting: Modern, electric.
 - b. Heating: Fireplaces in major rooms, characteristic with marble mantels, tile facings and hearths.

D. Site:

1. Orientation and general setting: House occupies the northwest corner of Sealy and Sixteenth Streets and faces south.

Prepared by: John C. Garner, Jr.
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PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

The Galveston Survey was jointly sponsored by the National Park Service, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation and the Galveston Historical Foundation Inc., and developed under the direction of James C. Massey, Chief of the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS). The historical data was written by John C. Garner, Jr., acting as the Director of the Galveston Architecture Inventory. The written data was edited for transmittal to the Library of Congress in the summer of 1980 by Kent R. Newell of the HABS staff. The photographs were taken by Allen Stross in the summer of 1967.